

## VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

of

State Route (SR) 118 at SR 34 and Donlon Road Intersection Improvement Project  
In Ventura County at Somis

Date: March 9, 2010

EA :07-105960



Prepared by:

*George Olguin*

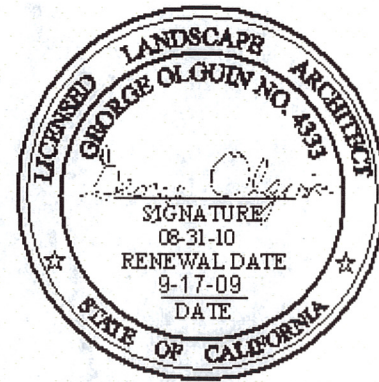
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The Scenic Resource Evaluation and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by or under the direction of the following Licensed Landscape Architect. The Licensed Landscape Architect attests to the technical information contained herein and the data upon which recommendations, conclusions, and decisions are based.

LANDSCAPE

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LICENSED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT





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## 1.0 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the visual impacts of the proposed project and to propose measures to mitigate any adverse visual impacts on the surrounding visual environment that are associated with construction of the project.

The analysis of potential impacts to visual resources caused by construction or operation of any highway facility or related facility largely involves answering the four questions found in Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, under Aesthetics. The four questions that must be addressed regarding whether the potential impacts of a project are significant are:

1. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
2. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway?
3. Would the project substantially degrade the existing character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
4. Would the project create a new source of substantial light of glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The approach of this visual assessment is adapted from the outlined in the publication, "Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects", Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), March 1981.

## 2.0 PLANNING AND REGULATORY POLICIES AFFECTING THE PROJECT

The public nature and visual importance of highways require that visual impacts – positive as well as negative – be adequately assessed and considered when a highway project is developed. Community acceptance of the project may also be strongly influenced by its visual effects. The Natural Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that all federal agencies “assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings” (EPA, 1999).

The coverage of highway aesthetics in Title 23 of the U.S. Code, which governs the FHWA, was augmented to reflect NEPA’s directives. Section 109 (h) states the costs of minimizing or eliminating the “destruction or disruption of manmade and natural resources,” specifically including “aesthetic values,” must be considered in striking this balance.

Likewise, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state “with... enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities.” (CA Public Resources Code Section 21001[b])

The Route Concept Report for Route 118 (January 1991) identifies the segment from Vineyard to Somis Road (SR 34) as having an existing Level of Service (LOS) of E, and a year 2010 LOS (without any improvements) of F. The RCR identifies the segment from Somis Road to Route 23 as having an existing LOS of D and a 2010 LOS (without any improvements) of D. Current traffic counts have indicated that the Route 118/34 intersection operates at a LOS of F. With the proposed improvements and current traffic volumes, the intersection is expected to operate at a LOS of C.

This project is consistent with the 1991 Route Concept Report (RCR), which indicates that the minimum improvement that will achieve the Concept LOS of D (west of the intersection) and C (east of the intersection) is to add 1 thru lane in each direction.

This project is also consistent with the objectives of the 1996 District System Management Plan (DSMP).



The proposed project is consistent with the 1998 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). This plan was adopted by SCAG on June 16, 1998 and approved by FHWA on June 9, 1998.

This project is identified in the 1998/99 – 04/05 RTIP, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation (FHWA/FTA) on July 31, 1998. Further, this project is listed in the fiscal year 2000/01 – 05/06 RTIP.

The proposed project is identified in the 1999 Ventura County Congestion Management Program (CMP) and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

### **3.0 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

Caltrans is proposing operational improvements at the SR 118 (Los Angeles Avenue) "T" intersections with SR 34 (Somis Road) and Donlon Road in the community of Somis, an unincorporated area of Ventura County. The SR 118/SR 34 intersection is located between Post Mile (PM) 10.80 and PM 11.05 on SR 118 and at PM 17.66 on SR 34. Improvements will extend approximately a quarter of a mile in each direction on SR 118 and approximately one fifth of a mile to the north and south of the intersection.

The purpose of the proposed project is to reduce delay time, relieve congestion, enhance safety at the SR 118 (Los Angeles Avenue) "T" intersections with SR 34 (Somis Road) and Donlon Road. The proposed project is intended to improve traffic operations and reduce collisions at the intersection approaches. These objectives would be accomplished by modifying the intersection to correct geometric and operations deficiencies. Additionally, the implementation of the proposed project would facilitate the safe and efficient movement of vehicles, people and goods through the area.

Motorists currently experience heavy traffic congestion at the SR 118/SR 34 intersection during both the AM (6:00 – 9:00) and PM (3:00 – 6:00) peak hours. The high volume of vehicles and trucks passing through the intersection at these hours results in substantial delays and is a factor in congestion related accidents within the project limits. Insufficient storage for vehicles making left turns from westbound (WB) SR 118 to southbound (SB) SR 34 poses a problem at the intersection, as this causes vehicles to back-up onto the WB SR 118 thru lane. Congestion, delays and safety issues during peak hours are further exacerbated by the proximity of the SR 118 and Donlon Road "T" intersection. This intersection no longer functions effectively as motorists experience difficulties turning into and out of Donlon Road. Trucks attempting these movements are especially an issue of concern because they encroach into other traffic lanes due to inadequate turning radii.

### **4.0 EXISTING FACILITY**

SR 118 is an interregional highway and freeway that stretches from SR 126 in Saticoy through Moorpark and Simi Valley to the Los Angeles County Line. The SR 118/SR 34 intersection is a part of the non-freeway segment of SR 118, located between the community of Saticoy and the City of Moorpark. This segment is a two-lane conventional highway. From the project location the route provides regional connectivity to SR 23 to the east, SR 34 and US 101 to the south and SR 126 to the west.

SR 34 is primarily a two-lane conventional highway that travels between Oxnard Boulevard in the City of Oxnard through Camarillo to SR 118. North of Camarillo, SR 34 crosses US 101, and becomes Lewis Road. Between Las Posas Road and SR 118, the route becomes Somis Road and ends in the community of Somis at the intersection with SR 118 (Los Angeles Avenue).

The proposed project is within a rural agricultural setting. The surrounding terrain is a valley floor and generally flat. The Santa Susana Mountains and the Camarillo Mountains are intermittently visible in the distance at some points along State Route 118. Agricultural tree windows rows are generally



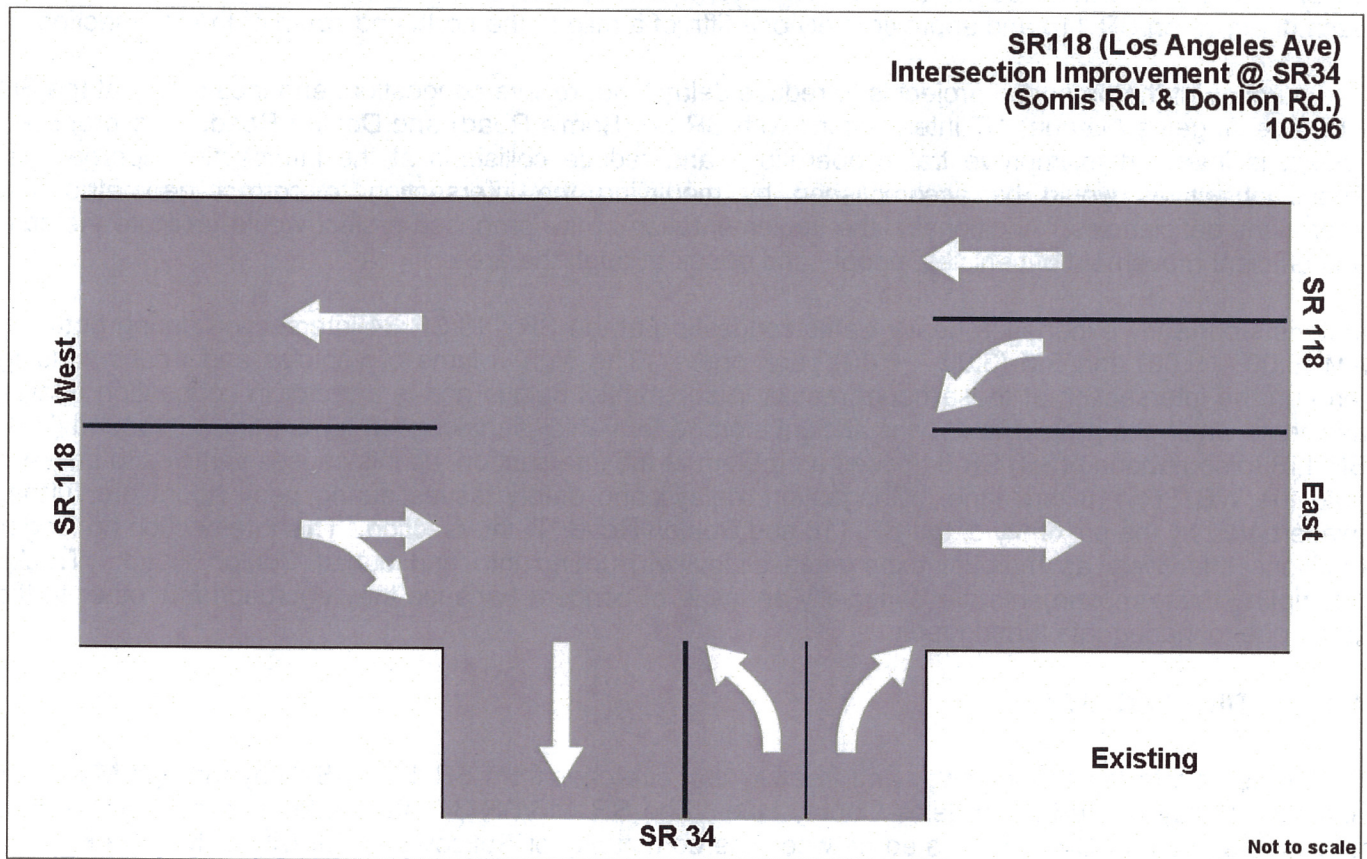
perpendicular to State Route 118 and are prominent vertical elements in the landscape. Agricultural type building structures dot the roadside along State Route 118. Coyote Canyon Creek traverses State Route 118 east of State Route 34 and is slightly visible from State Route 118. Non-native vegetation primarily eucalyptus trees along the creek is visible from State Route 118. A few nondescript structures are located at the intersection of State Route 118 east of State Route 34. The general feeling of the area is rural agricultural farmland.

## 5.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

### Alternative 1: No-Build

The No-Build Alternative proposes to maintain the existing configuration at the intersection. The figure below shows the existing SR 118/SR 34 intersection configuration.

**Alternative 1:  
No-Build Alternative**





## Alternative 2: Intersection Improvement Alternative

Alternative 2 proposes to widen and add a total of seven lanes to the SR 118/SR 34 intersection. Three turn lanes and one merge lane would be added on SR 118 as part of this proposed alternative. Additional lanes on SR 118 would include the following:

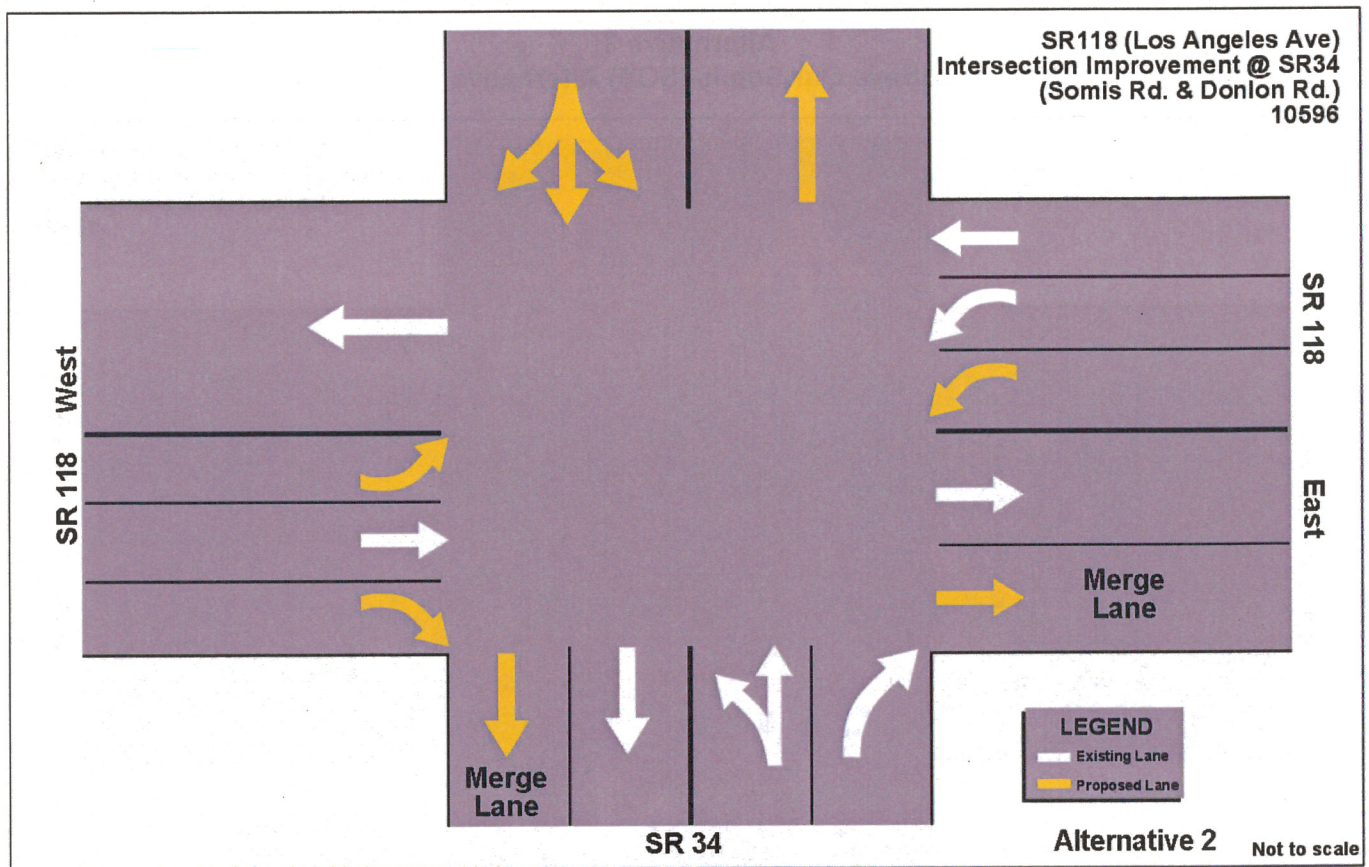
A right-turn lane and a left-turn lane on EB SR 118

A left-turn lane on WB SR 118 for movements onto SB SR 34

A merge lane on the east leg of EB SR 118 to accommodate movements from NB SR 34

A merge lane would also be added on SB SR 34. Donlon Road would become the north leg of the proposed 4-way intersection. The realigned SB lane would become a mixed thru/left-turn/right-turn lane at the intersection with SR 118 and the realigned BN lane would remain a thru lane at the intersection with SR 118 and the realigned NB lane would remain a thru lane at this location. The figure below shows the proposed intersection configuration for Alternative 2.

**Alternative 2:  
Intersection Improvement Alternative**





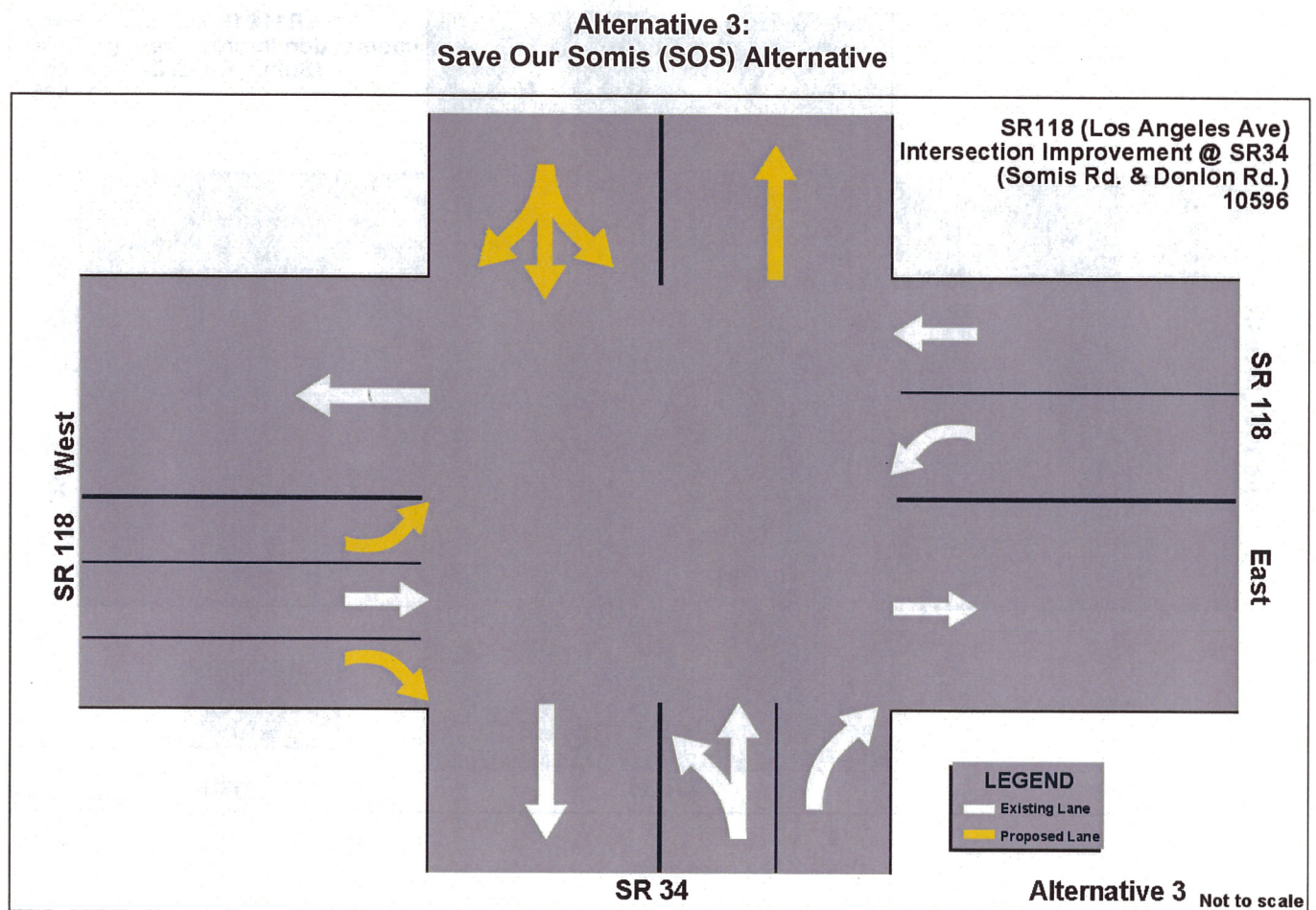
### Alternative 3: Save Our Somis (SOS) Alternative

Alternative 3 proposes to widen and add a total of four lanes to the SR 118/SR 34 intersection. A right turn lane and left turn lane would be added on EB SR 118.

Donlon Road would be realigned to become the north leg of the proposed 4-way intersection. The realigned SB lane would become a mixed thru/left-turn/right-turn lane at the intersection with SR 118 and the realigned NB lane would remain a thru lane at this location.

The west-leg approach of SR 118 would be widened from 60 feet to 93 feet and the east-leg approach would be widened from 100 feet to 106 feet. The SR 34 intersection approach would be widened from 60 feet to 75 feet. The proposed alternative would also expand the existing 140 foot left turn lane on WB SR 118.

Approximately 1.97 acres of new right-of-way is required for Alternative 3. The amount of farmland required is 1.41 acres along with 0.1 acres of open space. Easements are required for utilities, slope and drainage. The figure below shows the proposed intersection configuration for Alternative 3.





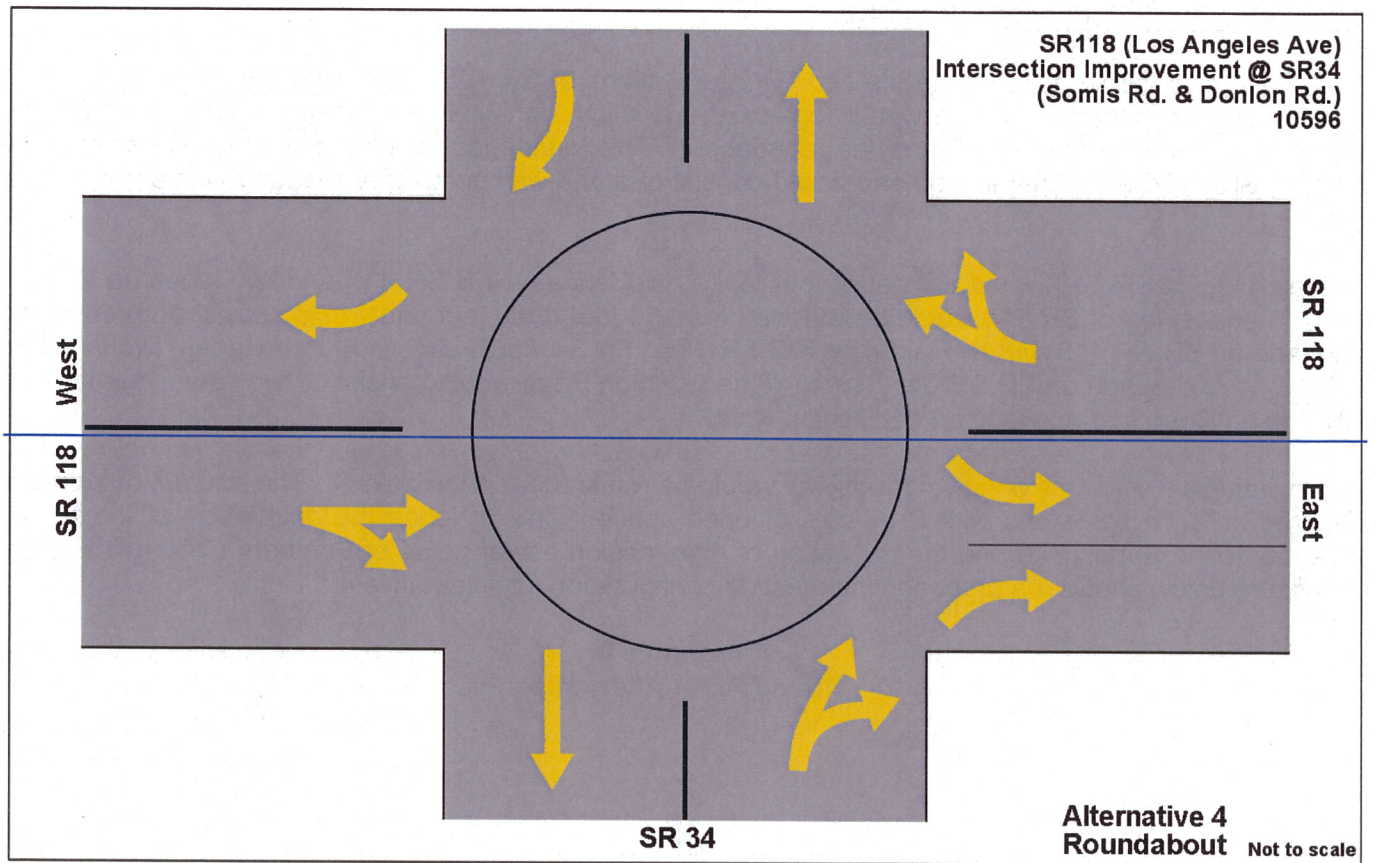
#### **Alternative 4: Roundabout Alternative**

Alternative 4 proposes to combine the two "T" intersections of SR 118/SR 34 and SR 118/Donlon Road and construct a roundabout that would replace the existing signalized intersection. Realigned Donlon Road would become the north leg of the roundabout. The roundabout would be constructed west of the existing SR 118/SR 34 intersection and would consist of a one-way circulatory roadway with a width of 24 feet.

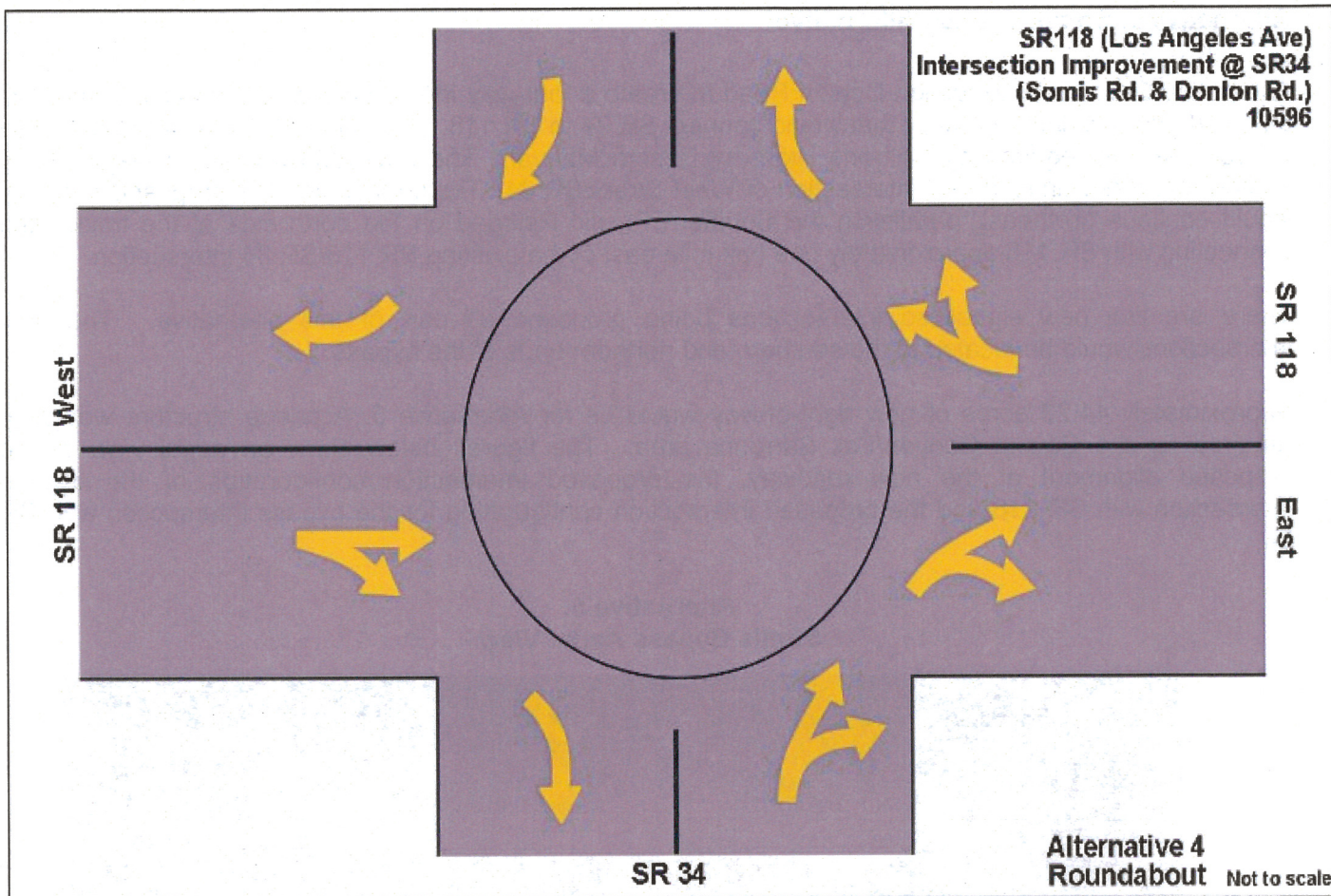
The east leg of SR 118 would consist of four lanes, two lanes on EB SR 118 and two lanes on WB SR 118. The west leg of SR 118 would be widened from 60 feet to 90 feet and would consist of three lanes, one lane on EB SR 118 and two lanes on WB SR 118. SR 34 would consist of three lanes, two lanes on NB SR 34 and 1 lane on SB SR 34. The realigned Donlon Road would consist of two lanes, one lane on NB Donlon Road and one lane on SB Donlon Road.

Approximately 3.33 acres of new right-of-way would be required for Alternative 4. The amount of farmland required is 2.3 acres along with 0.1 acres of open space. This includes the acquisition of the former Alliance Somis Supply site and the relocation of high-tension power poles of Southern California Edison. The figure below shows the proposed intersection configuration for Alternative 4.

#### **Alternative 4: Roundabout Alternative**









### **Alternative 5: Somis Bypass Alternative**

Alternative 5 proposes to realign Donlon Road to create a four-way intersection and would also construct a new 40 foot two-lane roadway that would connect SR 34 to SR 118. The width of this new facility would be 130 feet, as required by Caltrans Highway Design Manual. The new roadway would begin at the southern end of Somis, at the intersection of West Street/SR 34. From this point, the proposed roadway would continue northeast, paralleling the Southern Pacific Railroad on the north side of the tracks and connecting with SR 118 approximately one half mile east of the existing SR 118/SR 34 intersection.

There are two new signalized intersections being proposed as part of this alternative. The new intersections would be located at the southern and northern ends of the bypass.

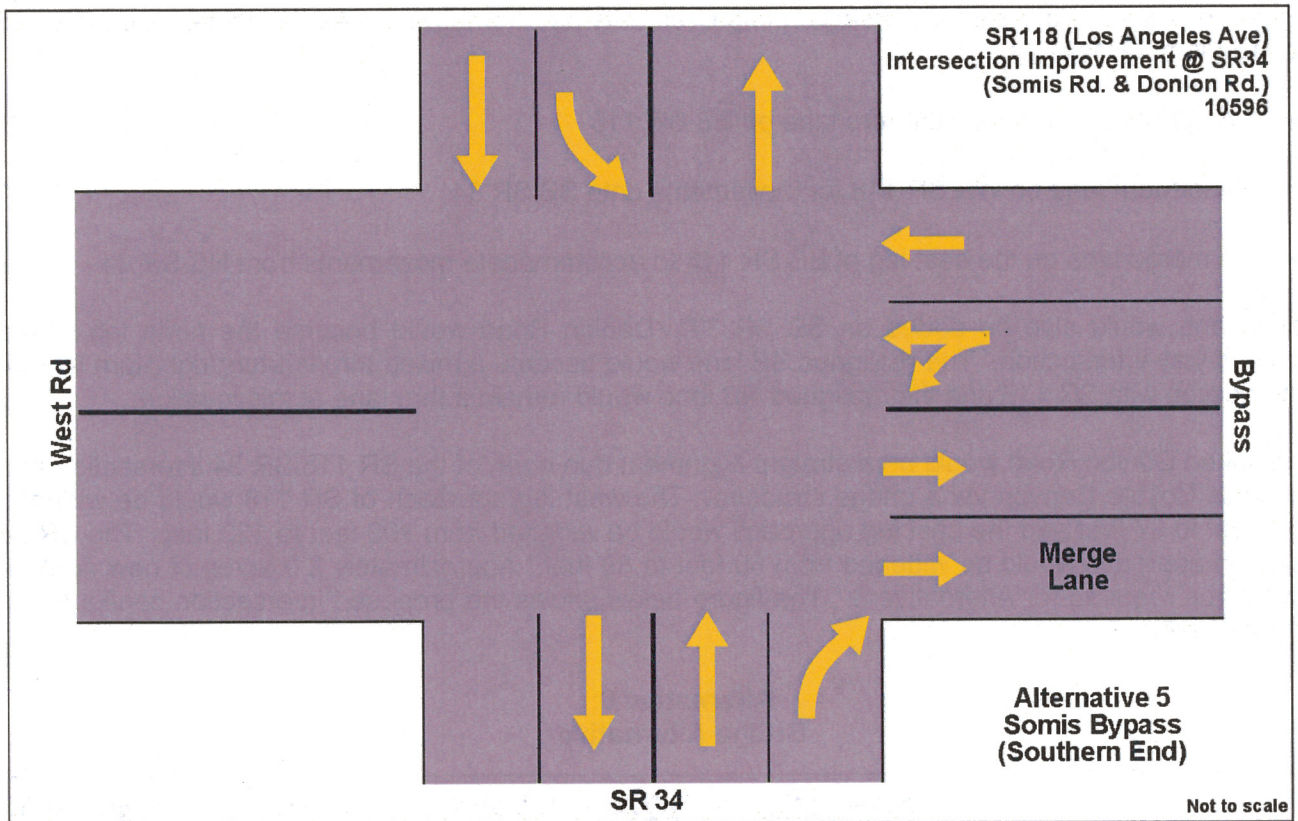
Approximately 44.23 acres of new right-of-way would be for Alternative 5. A bridge structure would be required for the Coyote Canyon/Fox Barranca area. The figures below show an aerial view of the proposed alignment of the new roadway, the proposed intersection configuration of the bypass intersection with SR 118 and the proposed intersection configuration for the bypass intersection with SR 34.

**Alternative 5:  
Somis Bypass Aerial View**

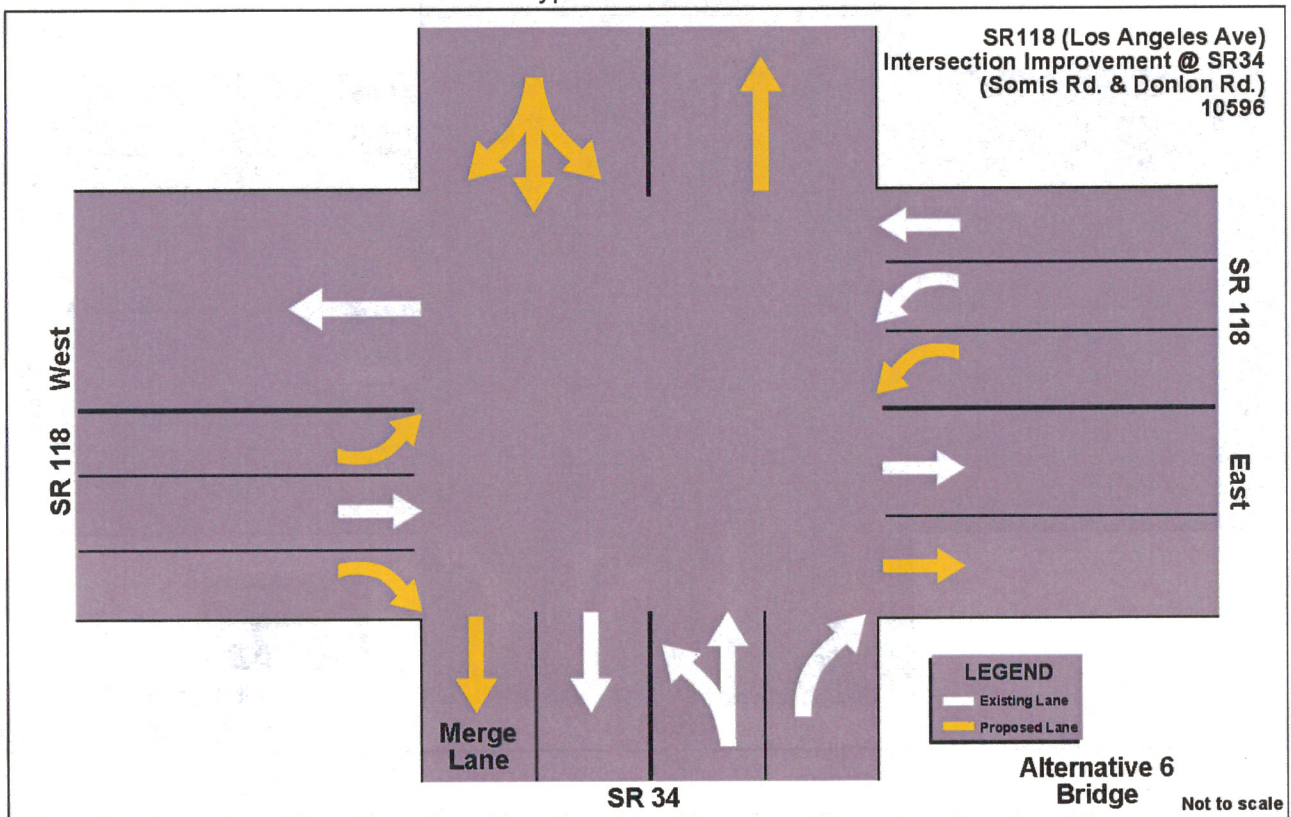




**Alternative 5:  
Somis Bypass Intersection with SR 34**



**Alternative 5:  
Somis Bypass Intersection with SR 118**





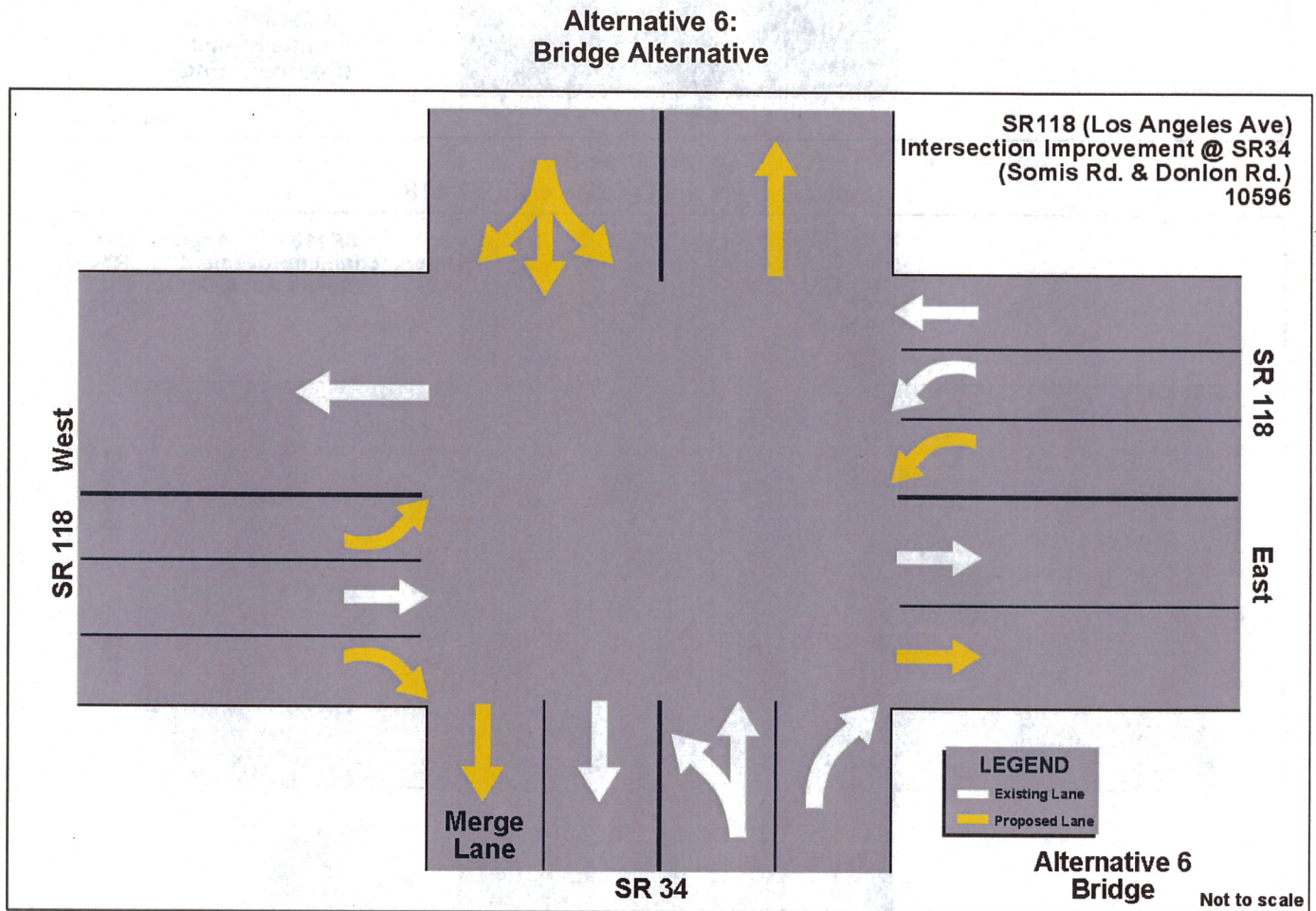
## Alternative 6: Bridge Alternative

Alternative 6 proposes the same intersection improvements as Alternative 2. Additional lanes on SR 118 would include the following:

- A right-turn lane and a left-turn lane on EB SR 118
- A left-turn lane on WB SR 118 for movements onto SB SR 34
- A merge lane on the east leg of EB SR 118 to accommodate movements from NB SR 34

A merge lane would also be added on SB SR 34. Donlon Road would become the north leg of the proposed 4-way intersection. The realigned SB lane would become a mixed thru/left-turn/right-turn lane at the intersection with SR 118 and the realigned NB lane would remain a thru lane at this location.

The realigned Donlon Road would be a straight alignment due north of the SR 118/SR 34 intersection and would cross Coyote Canyon via a bridge structure. The west leg approach of SR 118 would be widened from 60 feet to 97 feet and the east leg approach would be widened from 100 feet to 123 feet. The SR 34 intersection approach would be widened from 60 feet to 89 feet. Approximately 2.0 acres of new right-of-way would be required for Alternative 6. The figure below shows the proposed intersection configuration for Alternative 6.





## 6.0 ASSESSMENT METHOD

The process used in this visual impact study generally follows the guidelines outlined in the publication "Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects", Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), March 1981.

Six steps required to assess visual impacts were performed. They are as follows:

- Define the project setting and viewshed.
- Identify key views for visual assessment.
- Analyze existing visual resources and viewer response.
- Depict the visual appearance of project alternatives.
- Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.
- Propose methods to mitigate adverse visual impacts.

## 7.0 VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT

### 7.01 Project Setting

The regional landscape establishes the general visual environment of the project, but the specific visual environment upon which this assessment will focus is determined by defining landscape units and the project viewshed.

### 7.02 Landscape Units

A landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. A landscape unit will often correspond to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers. The project site is rural an agricultural area with open vistas and on relatively flat terrain. This distinct landscape unit characterizes the project study area.

### 7.03 Project Viewshed

A viewshed is a subset of a landscape unit and is comprised of all the surface areas visible from an observer's viewpoint. The limits of a viewshed are defined as the visual limits of the views located from the proposed project. The viewshed also includes the locations of viewers likely to be affected by visual changes brought about by project features.

## 8.0 EXISTING VISUAL RESOURCES AND VIEWER RESPONSE

### 8.01 FHWA Method of Visual Resources Analysis

#### Identify Visual Character

Visual character is descriptive and non-evaluative which means it is based on defined attributes that are neither good nor bad in themselves. A change in visual character cannot be described as having good or bad attributes until it is compared with the viewer response to that change.

#### Assess Visual Quality

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness and unity present in the viewshed. The FHWA states that this method should correlate with public judgments of visual quality well enough to predict those judgments. This approach is particularly useful in highway planning because it does not presume that a highway project is necessarily an eyesore. This approach to evaluating visual quality can also help identify specific methods for mitigating each adverse impact that may occur as a result of a project. The three criteria for evaluating visual quality can be defined as follows:

- **Vividness** is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.



- **Intactness** is the visual integrity of the natural and man-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. It can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
- **Unity** is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. It frequently attests to the careful design of individual manmade components in the landscape.

## 8.02 Existing Visual Resources

The proposed project is within a rural agricultural setting. The surrounding terrain is a valley floor and generally flat. The Santa Susana Mountains and the Camarillo Mountains are intermittently visible in the distance at some points along SR 118. The nearby mountain ranges are partially visible but obstructed by agricultural buildings and tree windrows. Agricultural tree windrows are generally perpendicular to SR 118 and are prominent vertical elements in the landscape. Coyote Canyon Creek traverses SR 118 east of SR 34 and is slightly visible from SR 118. The natural and agricultural features and patterns are reasonably attractive and interesting, but are not visually distinctive or unusual within the regional area.

The project is not on a designated State Scenic Highway nor is it on a highway eligible for designation. Agricultural type building structures dot the roadside along SR 118. A few nondescript structures are located at the intersection of SR 118 east of SR 34. The overall visual quality of the area is rural agricultural in character.

## 8.03 Methods of Predicting Viewer Response

Project viewers fall into two categories: those using the highway and those looking toward it. The study corridor contains four viewer groups: motorists, residents, pedestrians and recreational users. Methods of predicting how viewers might react to visual changes brought about by a project are based on two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements combine to form a method of predicting how the public might react to visual changes brought about by a highway project.

- **Viewer sensitivity** is defined both as the viewers' concern for scenic quality and the viewers' response to change in the visual resources that make up the view. Local values and goals may confer visual significance on landscape components and areas that would otherwise appear unexceptional in a visual resource analysis. Even when the existing appearance of a project site is uninspiring, a community may still object to projects that fall short of its visual goals. Analysts can learn about these special resources and community aspirations for visual quality through citizen participation procedures, as well as from local publications and planning documents.
- **Viewer exposure** is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, duration of their view, speed at which the viewer moves, and position of the viewer. High viewer exposure heightens the importance of early consideration of design, art, and architecture and their roles in managing the visual resource effects of a project.

## 8.04 Existing Viewer Groups, Viewer Exposure, Viewer Awareness And Viewer Sensitivity.

The project study contains mainly two viewer groups: motorist and resident viewer. This section describes the different types of viewer groups, exposures to views, viewer activity and viewer awareness. For each viewer group the predicted response to visual change is described in relationship to viewer exposure and sensitivity.



*Motorist viewer group:*

The motorist viewer group consists of commuters, local residents, and travelers. A motorist's awareness of surrounding views varies based on travel speed, purpose of the drive, and the scenic quality of surrounding views. Frequently traveling through the area, commuters are primarily focused on the commute and the task of navigating through traffic. Commuters usually consider views as a secondary focus. Commuters and residents gain familiarity with surrounding views through repetitive exposure. Unlike local residents, commuters do not have the same sense of ownership and awareness of views, because they do not reside within that environment, they only pass through it. Travelers have less familiarity with existing views, yet, because they are generally traveling at a slower pace, they tend to focus on the visual environment.

*Resident Viewer Group:*

The resident viewer group includes people who may have views of the project area from their homes, place of business or employment. Residents have a high level of exposure to the visual environment and high visual awareness. Unlike motorists, residents are stationary and usually have more time to take in their surrounding views, and at a fairly leisurely pace. They observe the visual environment on a daily basis and for an extended period of time. They become very familiar with the local environment and may take ownership of it. Residents are highly sensitive to visual changes, particularly if the changes occur within close proximity to their homes, place of business, employment or include displacement of nearby residences and/or important visual features.

*Pedestrian Viewer Group:*

Similar to residents, pedestrians have a high level of exposure to the visual environment and a high level of visual awareness. It is anticipated that a majority of the pedestrian traffic is comprised of people who are local in the area: employees, residents, or students. The viewer group may have some sense of ownership over the existing environment. Pedestrians tend to be more aware of the visual environment because of their immediate and tangible experience of moving through it. Pedestrians are normally traveling at a slow speed and therefore have more opportunity to view the surrounding area. Even for those pedestrians whose primary purpose is to travel from point A to point B, their slower travel of speed and tangible physical experience of the surrounding environment causes them to be highly sensitive to visual changes.

*Recreational Viewer Group:*

Recreational include individuals from various areas and residents using or visiting a regional resource such as museum, park, nature trail. Although the recreational viewer's exposure to the visual environment is limited to periodic experiences of limited duration, they tend to have high expectations of what the condition of the visual environment should be, and exhibit a high level of visual awareness. For many in this group, the primary focus of their activity is to leisurely enjoy a visually attractive resource. Even for those whose primary purpose is to exercise, the expectation is that the surrounding environment would be pleasant and enjoyable. The recreational viewer group can become somewhat familiar with the visual environment and surrounding resources depending on frequency of use and may have some sense of ownership over that environment. However, this would be more likely for residents who frequent a local park versus recreationalists from various areas using a regional resource. Because of their limited and periodic exposure, but high level of visual awareness, the recreational viewer group is anticipated to be moderately sensitive to visual quality changes.

## **9.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **9.01 Method of Assessing Project Impacts**

The visual impacts of project alternatives are determined by assessing the visual resource change due to the project and predicting viewer response to that change.



Visual resource change is the sum of the change in visual character and change in visual quality. The first step in determining visual resource change is to assess the compatibility of the proposed project with the visual character of the existing landscape. The second step is to compare the visual quality of the existing resources with projected visual quality after the project is constructed.

The viewer response to project changes is the sum of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity to the project as determined in the preceding section.

The resulting level of visual impact is determined by combining the severity of resource change with the degree to which people are likely to oppose the change.

### **9.02 Definition of Visual Impact Levels**

**Low** - Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment. May or may not require mitigation.

**Moderate** - Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response. Impact can be mitigated within five years using conventional practices.

**Moderately High** - Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response. Extraordinary mitigation practices may be required. Landscape treatment required will generally take longer than five years to mitigate.

**High** - A high level of adverse change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot mitigate the impacts. Viewer response level is high. An alternative project design may be required to avoid highly adverse impacts.

### **9.03 Analysis of Key Views**

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key viewpoints that would most clearly display the visual effects of the project. Key views also represent the primary viewer groups that would potentially be affected by the project.

### **9.04 Analysis of Potential Impacts to Visual Resources**

The analysis of potential impacts to visual resources caused by construction or operation of any highway facility or related facility largely involves answering the four questions found in; Title 14. Natural Resources, Division 6. Resources Agency, Chapter 3. Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Article 20. Definitions, Appendix G, under Aesthetics.

The findings are presented in the in the accompanying matrix:

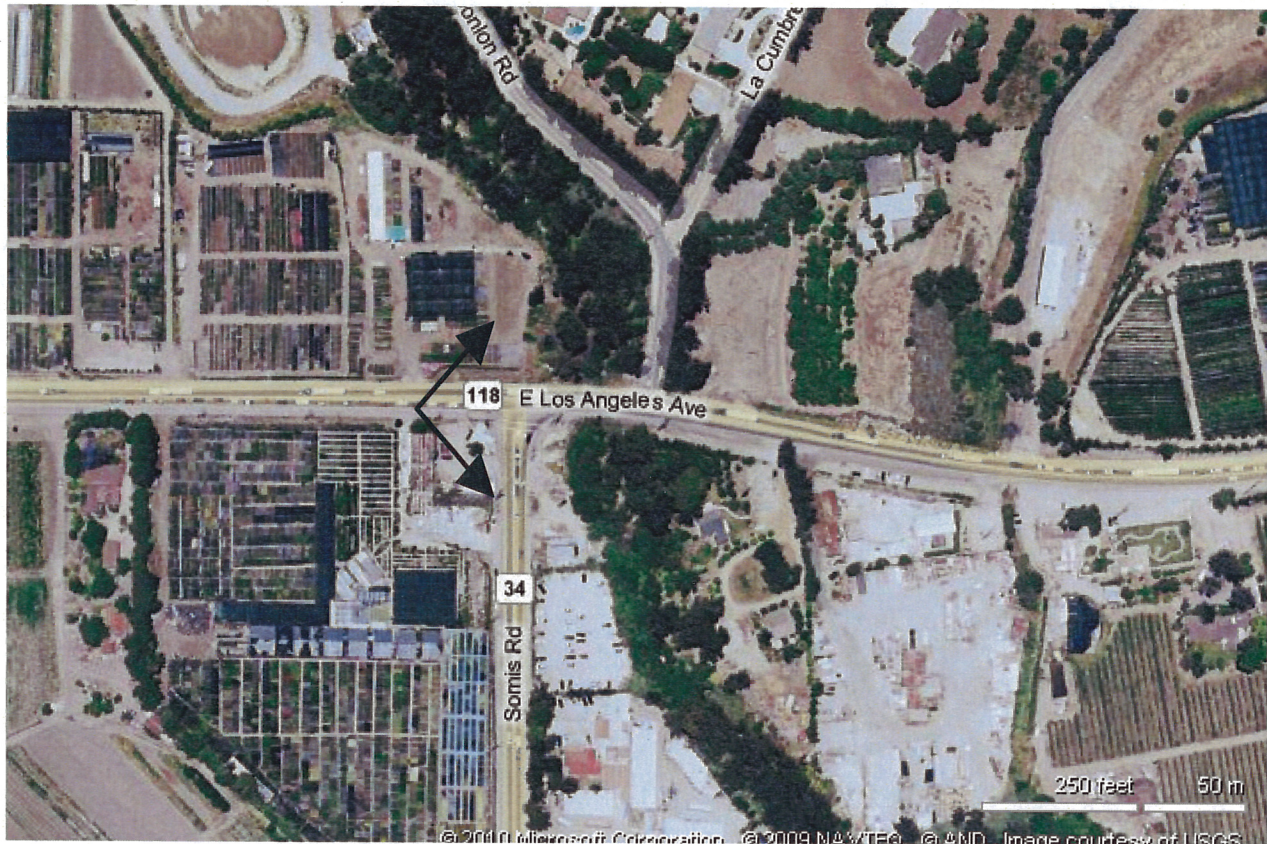


	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>I. AESTHETICS:</b> Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 10.0 Visual Assessment #1

### Assessing the Visual Quality of Existing Conditions

Visual Assessment #1 is located looking eastbound on SR 118. Within this particular area the roadway is located in a rural agricultural setting with a limited viewshed. Existing metal beam guardrail is used on both sides of the roadway, utility poles, lighting and signs clutter the view. Commercial businesses are located at each corner of SR 118 and SR 34.





**EXISTING VIEW**  
**Eastbound SR 118 @ SR 34**





## Alternative 2 – Intersection Improvement

### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

The changes in the views after project construction would be from the motorist perspective (views of the road) rather than views to the road. The project area is rural agricultural and the residents are not in close proximity to the project site their view would not be impacted by this alternative as they are not immediately adjacent to the road. The motorists' views from the road, will however, be affected not by the additional lanes but rather the loss of vegetation due to the cut slope on the north side of Route 118 and additional right of way take to accommodate the additional lanes. The realignment of Donlon Road to intersect at the other three roads will improve driver visibility than the current alignment. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. However, the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed causing intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality.

**PROPOSED VIEW ALTERNATIVE 2**  
**Eastbound SR 118 @ SR 34**

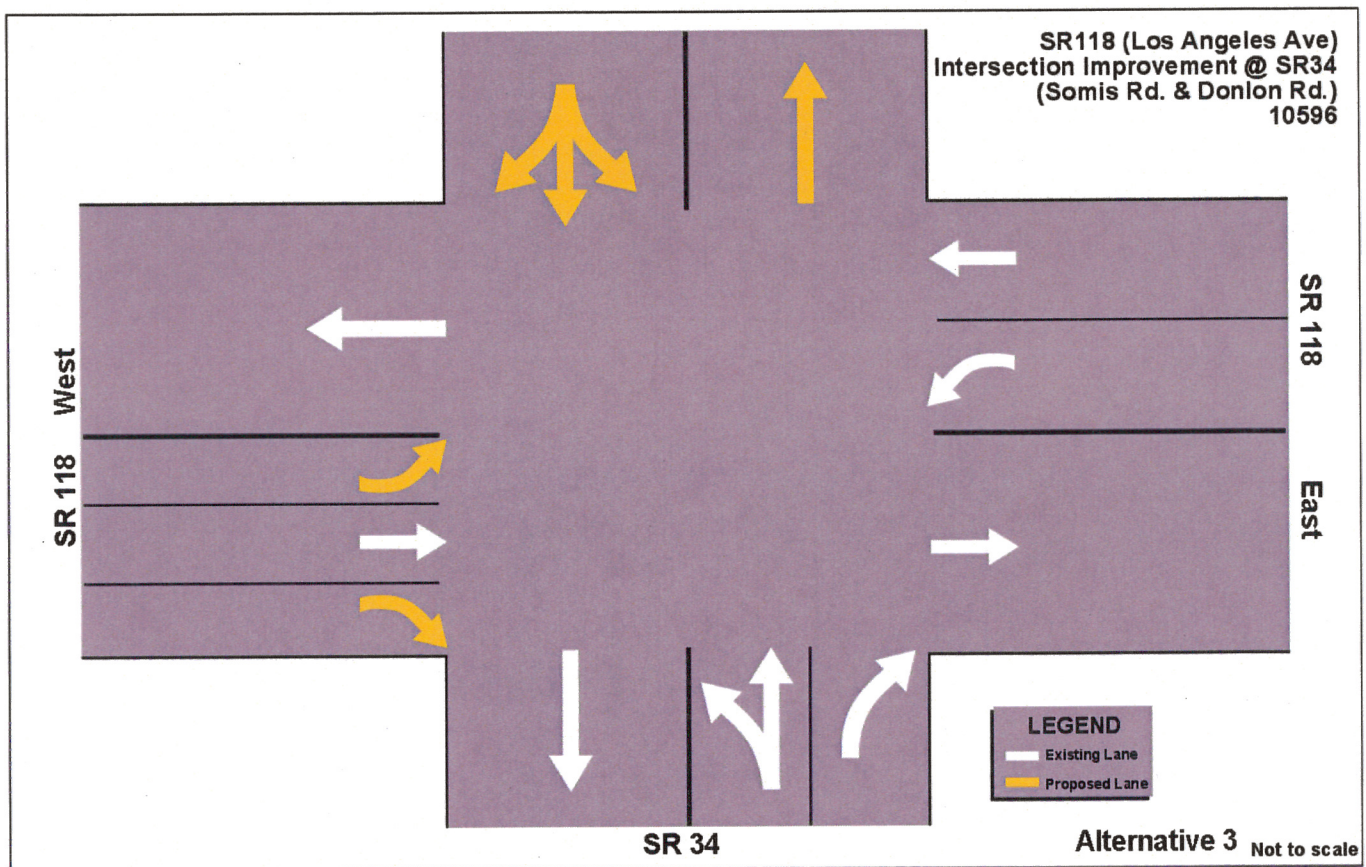





### Alternative 3- Save Our Somis (SOS)

#### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

The changes in the views after project construction would be from the motorist perspective (views of the road) rather than views to the road. The project area is rural agricultural and the residents are not in close proximity to the project site their view would not be impacted by this alternative as they are not immediately adjacent to the road. Even though the residents are in close proximity, their view would not be impacted by this alternative. The motorists' views from the road, will however, be affected not by the additional lanes but rather the loss of vegetation due to the cut slope on the north side of Route 118 and additional right of way take to accommodate the additional lanes. The realignment of Donlon Road to intersect at the other three roads will improve driver visibility than the current alignment. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. However, the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed causing intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality.



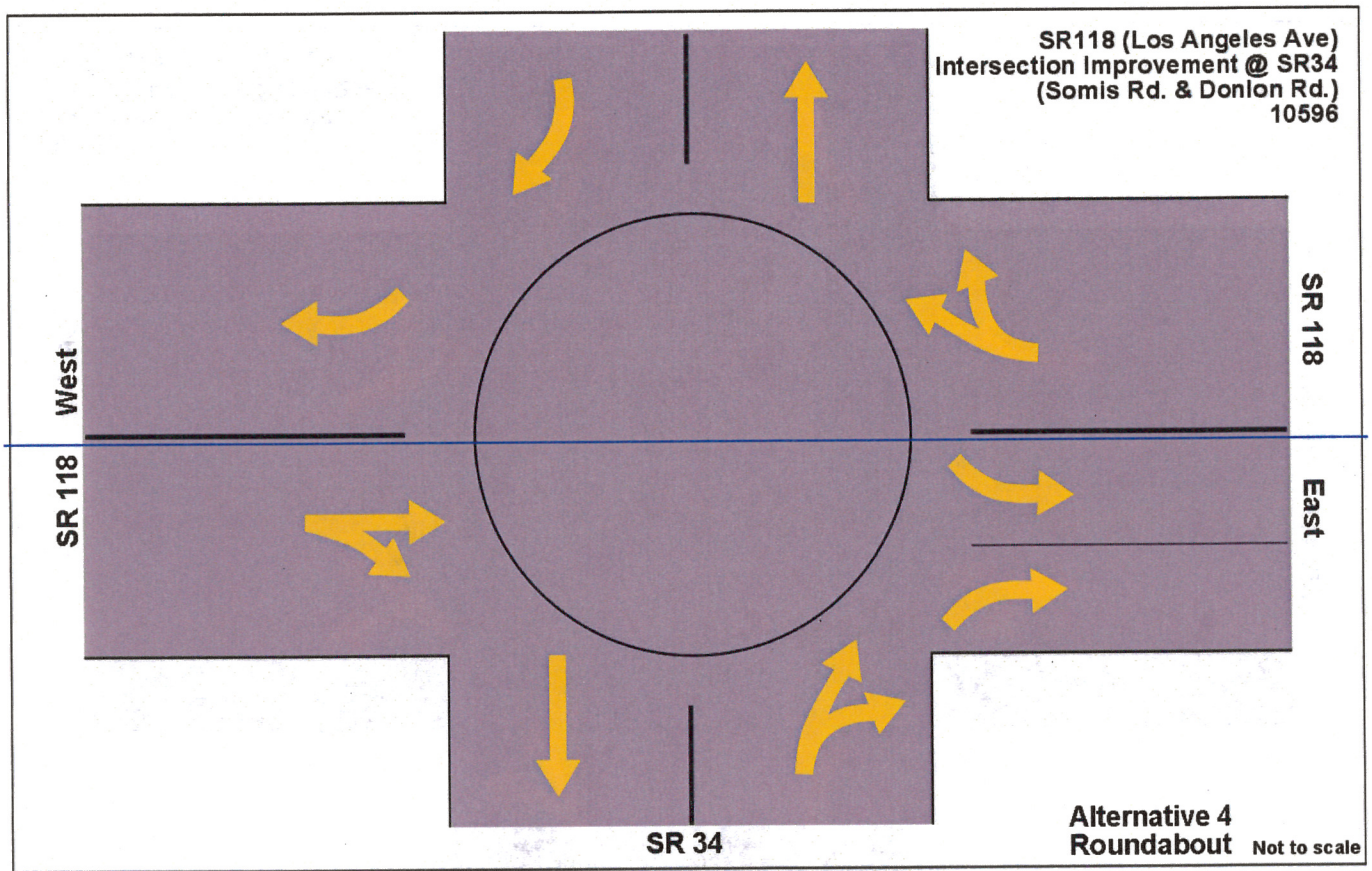



#### **Alternative 4- Roundabout**

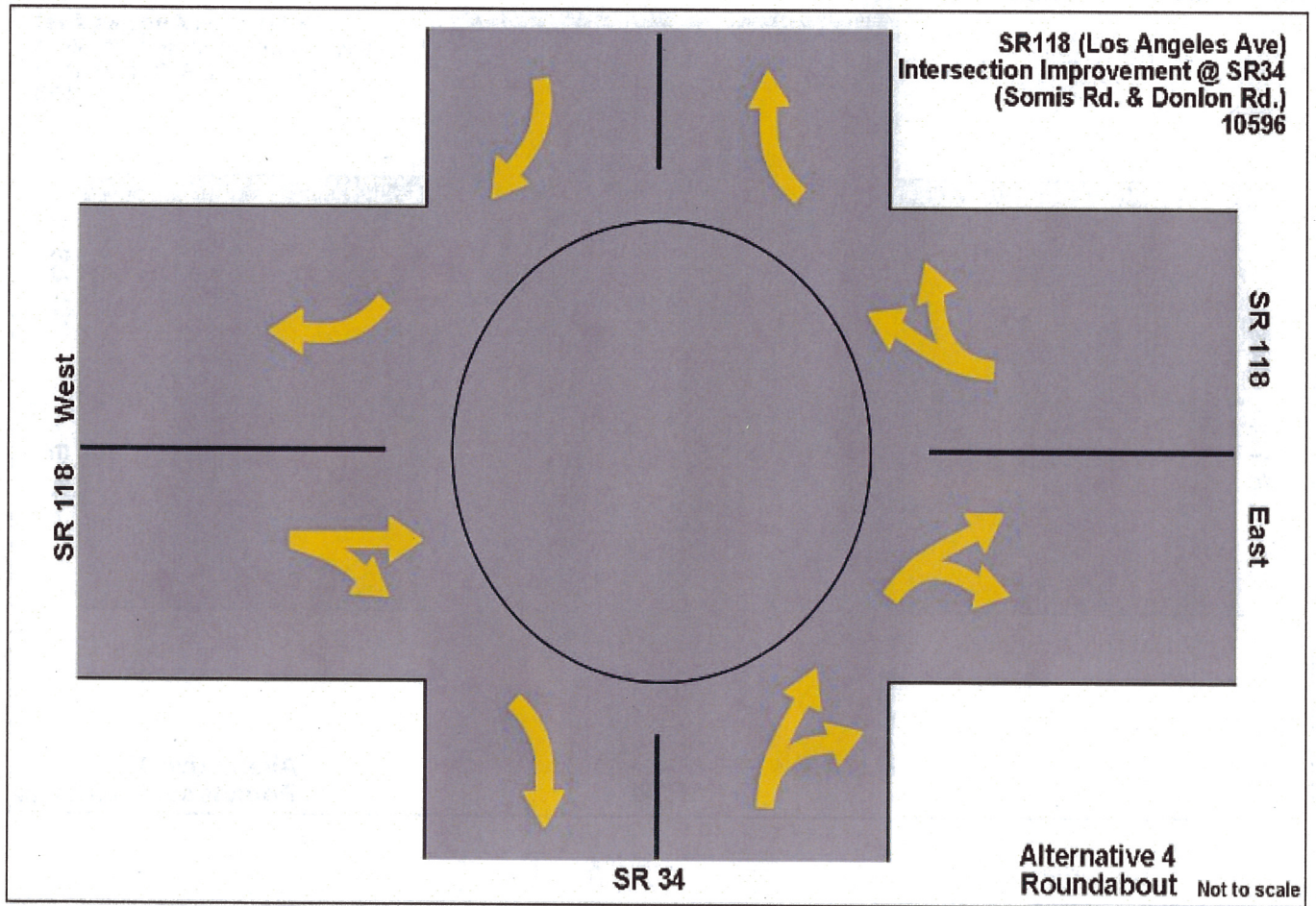
##### **Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction**

The changes in the views after project construction would be from the motorist perspective (views of the road) rather than views to the road. The project area is rural agricultural and the residents are not in close proximity to the project site their view would not be impacted by this alternative as they are not immediately adjacent to the road. The motorists' views from the road will be affected by the additional lanes, the loss of vegetation due to the additional lanes on Route 118 and SR 34, the realignment of the roadway to accommodate the roundabout. The realignment of Donlon Road to intersect at the other three roads will improve driver visibility than the current alignment. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. If the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed will cause intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality. However, if the multiple utility lines were relocated as to not clutter the view and the removal of the signalized light would improve the visual quality of intactness and unity. How the center of the roundabout is treated will also affect the motorist views either negatively or positively.












## Alternative 5- Somis Bypass

### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

Due to the orientation of the study looking eastward on SR 118 near the intersection of SR 34, assessing the visual quality in the views after project construction for alternative 5 is not within the viewshed. Therefore, an assessment for Visual Assessment #1 is not warranted for this location. The Donlon Road realignment analysis is covered elsewhere in this document.



### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

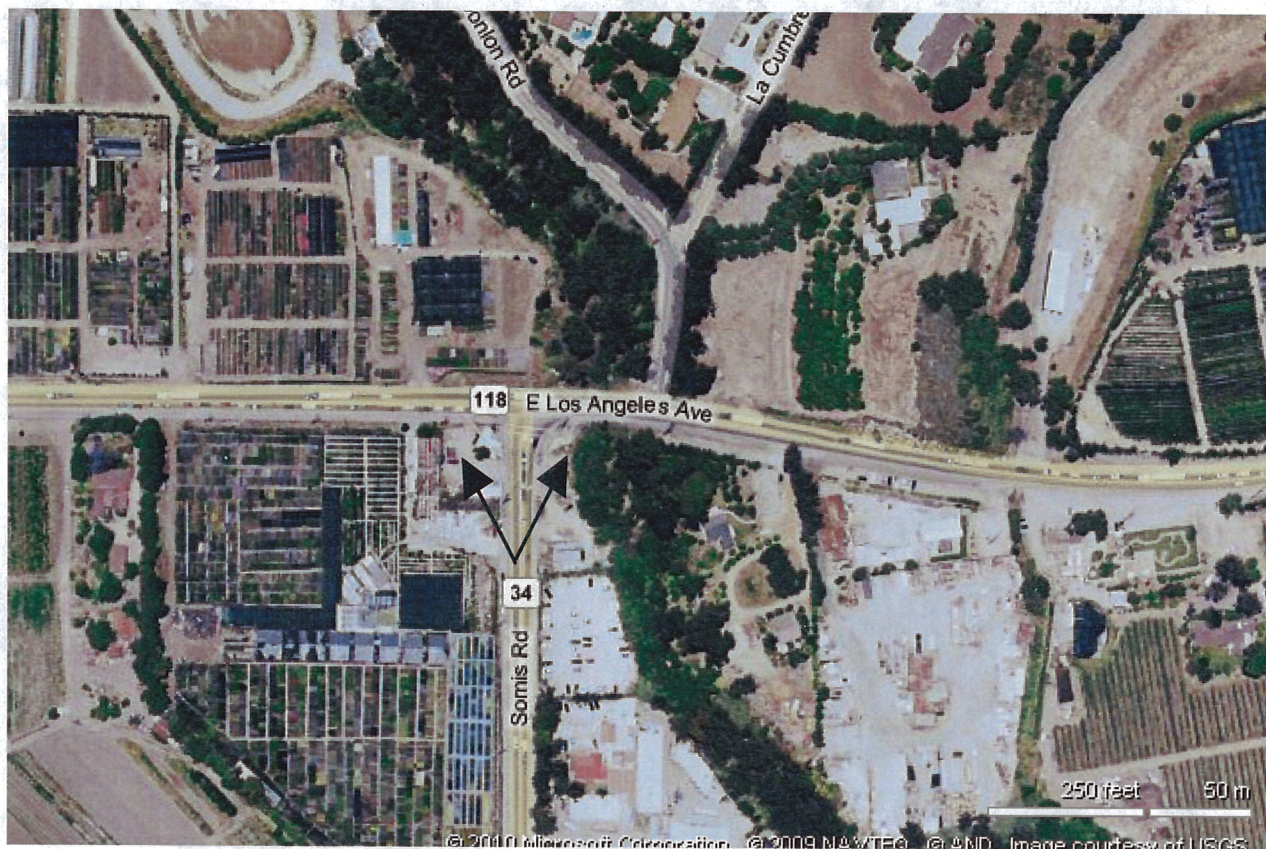
The changes in the views after project construction in Alternative 6 would be mainly from the motorist perspective rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural and not residential. Even though the residents are in close proximity, their view would not be impacted by this alternative. The visual impacts would be similar to that in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. The motorists' views from the road will be affected by the additional lanes, the loss of vegetation due to the additional lanes on Route 118 and SR 34. The realignment of Donlon Road to intersect at the other three roads will improve driver visibility than the current alignment. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. If the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed will cause intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality. However, if the multiple utility lines were relocated as to not clutter the view and the removal of the signalized light would improve the visual quality of intactness and unity.




## 11.0 Visual Assessment #2

### Assessing the Visual Quality of Existing Conditions

Visual Assessment #2 is located looking north on Somis Road/SR 34 toward SR 118 intersection. Within this particular area the roadway is located in a rural agricultural setting with a limited viewshed. Existing utility poles, lighting and signs clutter the view. Commercial businesses are located at each corner of SR 118 and SR 34. Mature trees and vegetation are seen in the background and provide a visible screen.



### EXISTING VIEW

Northbound SR 34 @ junction to SR 118



**Alternative 2 – Intersection Improvement**  
**Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction**



The changes in the views after project construction would be mainly from the motorist view (views of the road) rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural. The additional lanes will not affect the motorists' views from the road. However, there will be some loss of vegetation in the background due to the realignment of Donlon Road to intersect at the other three roads. The existing businesses will loose property in order to accommodate the widening. The building on the corner will have to be removed; however, the visibility and motorists' line of sight would be improved. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. However, the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed causing intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality.

**PROPOSED VIEW ALTERNATIVE 2**  
**Northbound SR 34 @ junction to SR 118**

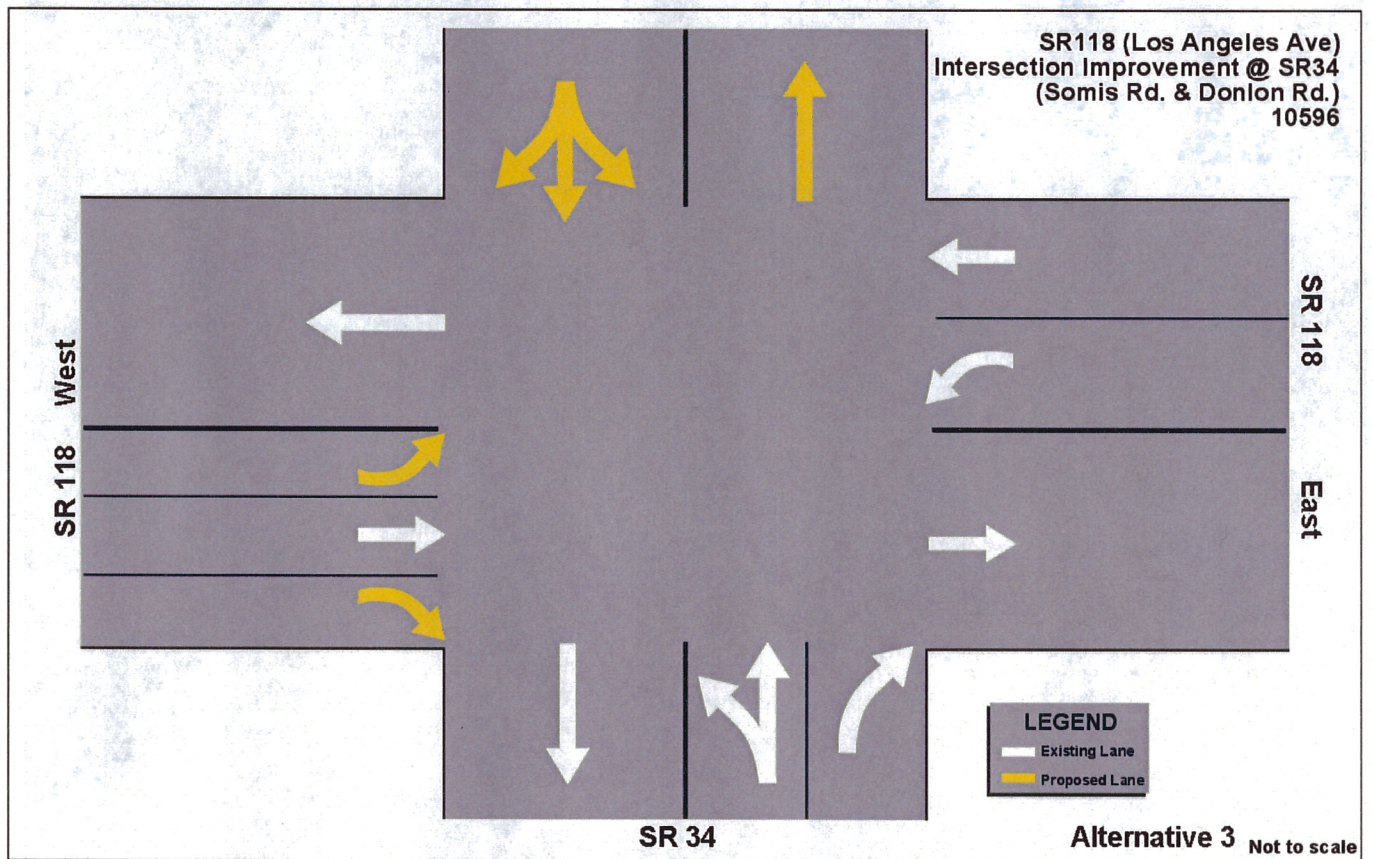





### Alternative 3- Save Our Somis (SOS)

#### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

The changes in the views after project construction in Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2. The changes in view would be from the motorist perspective (views of the road) rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural. The motorists' views from the road, will however, be affected not by the additional lanes but rather the loss of vegetation in Coyote Creek to accommodate the realignment of Donlon Road and the removal of the existing building at the corner of SR 118 and SR 34. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. However, the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed causing intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality.



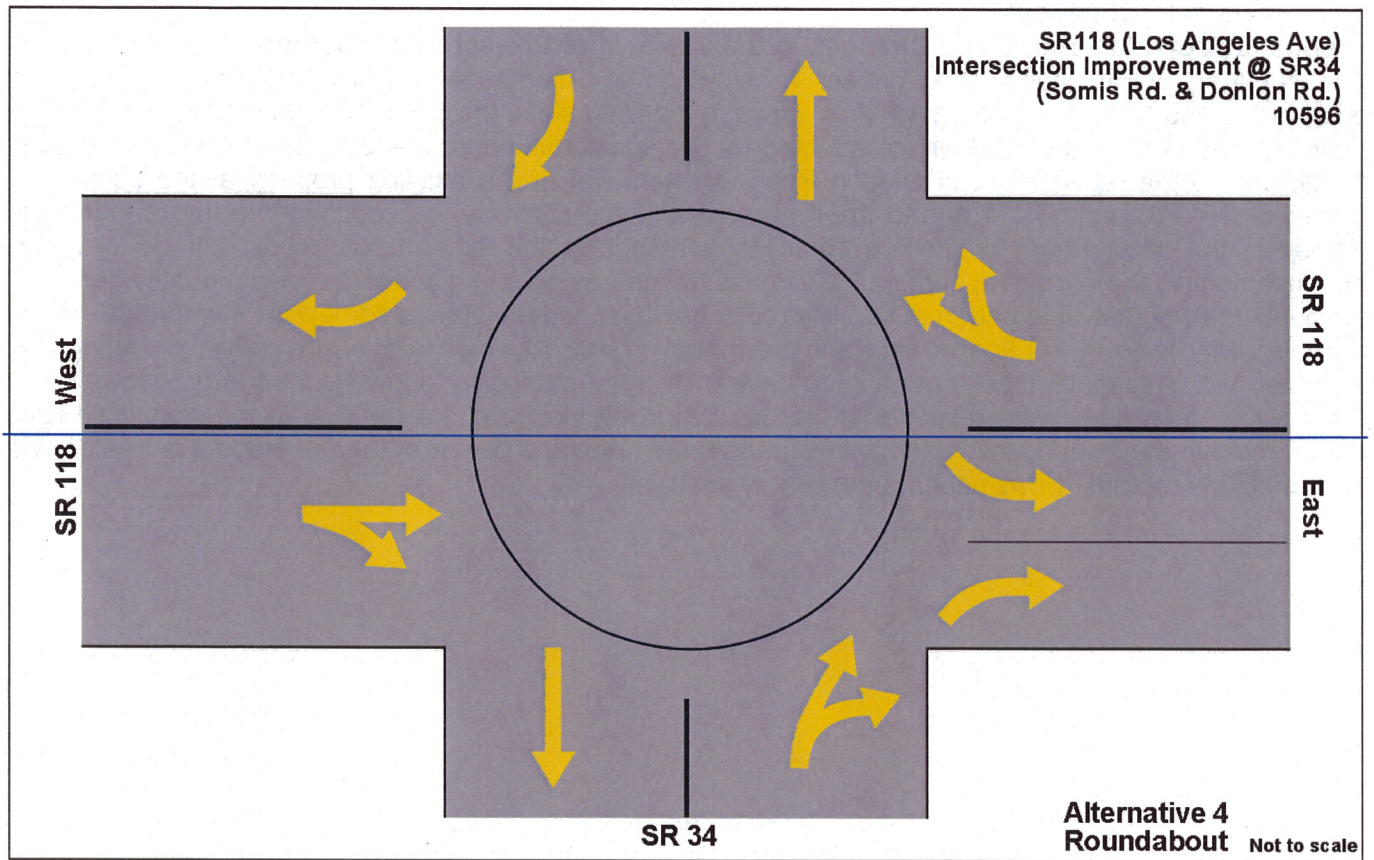



#### **Alternative 4- Roundabout**

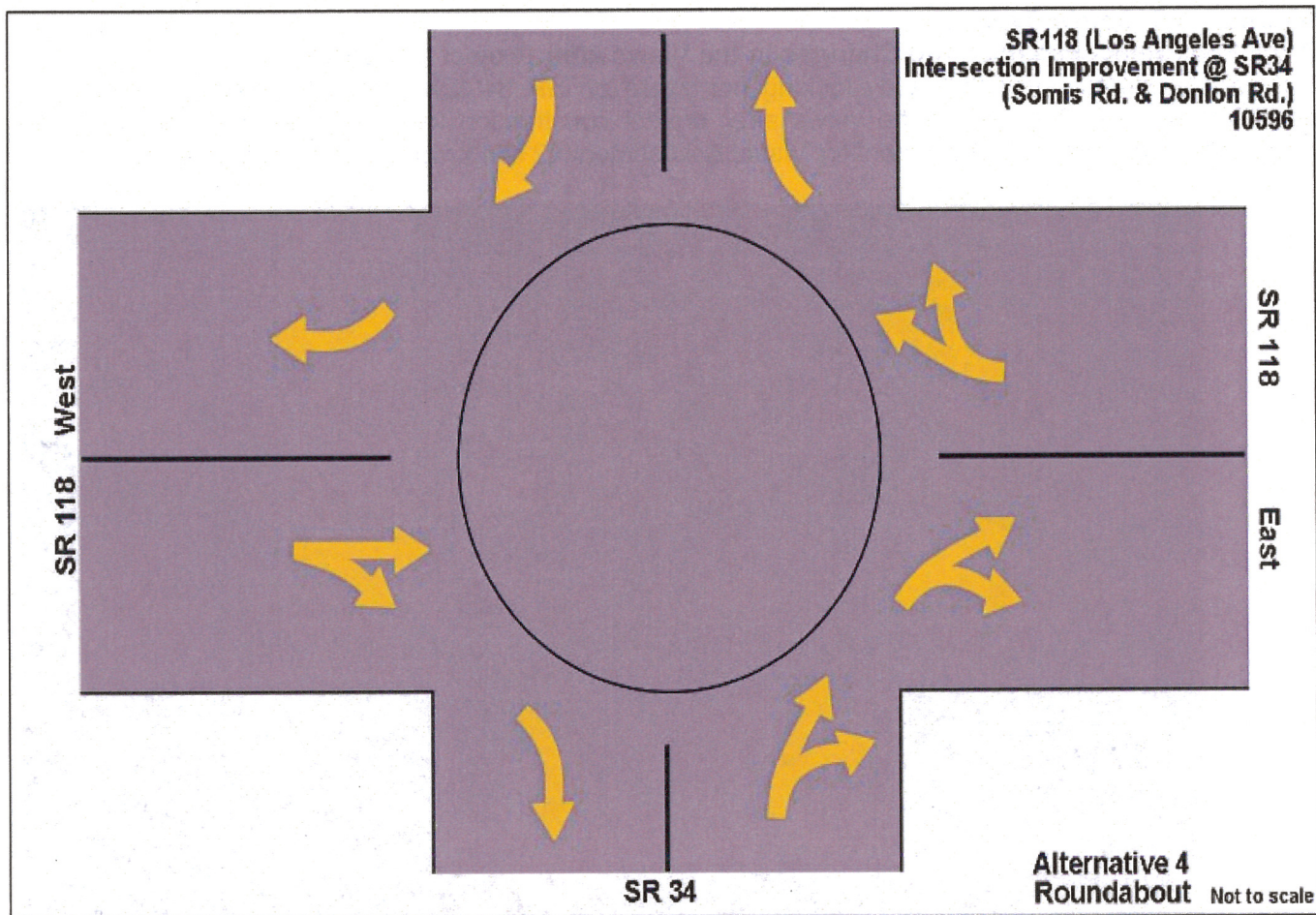
##### **Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction**

The changes in the views after project construction in Alternative 4 would be from the motorist perspective (views of the road) rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural. The motorists' views from the road will be affected by the additional lanes, the loss of vegetation in Coyote Creek due to the realignment of Donlon Road, the removal of the existing property at the southwest corner of SR 118 and SR 34 due to the realignment of the roadway to accommodate the roundabout. However, the realignment of Donlon Road to intersect at the other three roads will be a visual enhancement to the current alignment. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. If the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed will cause intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality. However, if the multiple utility lines were relocated as to not clutter the view and the removal of the signalized light would improve the visual quality of intactness and unity. How the center of the roundabout is treated will also affect the motorist views either negatively or positively.












## Alternative 5- Somis Bypass

### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

Due to the orientation of the study looking northward on SR 34 toward the intersection of SR 118, assessing the visual quality in the views after project construction for alternative 5 is not within the viewshed. Therefore, an assessment for Visual Assessment #2 is not warranted for this location.



### Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction

The changes in the views after project construction in Alternative 6 would be from the motorist perspective (views of the road) rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural. The visual impacts would be similar to that in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. The motorists' views from the road will be affected by the additional lanes, the loss of vegetation due to the realignment of Donlon Road and the removal of the existing building at the southwest corner of SR 118. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. If the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed will cause intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality. However, if the multiple utility lines were relocated as to not clutter the view and the removal of the signalized light would improve the visual quality of intactness and unity.


### Assessing the Visual Quality of Existing Conditions

Visual Assessment #3 will study two key views for Alternative 5. They are located looking ~~west~~ east on SR 118 where the new intersection is proposed and the second is looking south on SR 34 where the



other new intersection is proposed. Within this particular area the roadway is located in a rural agricultural setting with a limited viewshed. Existing utility poles, signs and the rail line are seen within the view. Mature trees and vegetation as well as the mountain ranges are seen in the background.





## EXISTING VIEW



The changes in the views after project construction in Alternative 5 would be the motorist perspective and those looking onto the road from the adjacent agricultural lands. The views to and from the road will be affected by the creation of a new highway, the loss of vegetation and farmland, and the creation of two new signalized intersections to accommodate the new highway. Vividness drops from high to moderate visual quality because elements had highly memorable elements that combine in striking visual patterns but after project construction, the road encroaches upon the natural landscape only to form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. Intactness diminishes from high to moderately low visual quality. The man-made development and natural landscape are disturbed and encroach on the visual setting that creates an eyesore to viewers. As the definition below states for high visual quality for unity is the degree to which visual elements of the landscape join to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern. This would be true for the current site conditions. However, after project construction, the man-made and natural patterns do not reinforce each other and visually looks chaotic and jumbled causing unity to drop to low visual quality.




### 13.0 Visual Assessment #4

#### Assessing the Visual Quality of Existing Conditions

Visual Assessment #4 is located looking west on SR 118 toward the intersection of SR 118 and SR 34. Within this particular area the roadway is located in a rural agricultural setting with a limited viewshed. Existing utility poles, lighting, metal beam guardrails and signs clutter the view. Commercial businesses are located at each corner of SR 118 and SR 34. Mature trees set in a windrow are seen in the background and provide a visible screen to the adjacent agricultural land.



Westbound SR 118 near junction with SR 34





### **Alternative 2 – Intersection Improvement**

#### **Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction**

The changes in the views after project construction is from the motorist view rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural and not residential. The motorists' views from the road will not be affected by the additional lanes from this vantage point. However, there will be some loss to the adjacent property and its building due to the realignment. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. However, the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed causing intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality.






**Alternative 3- Save Our Somis (SOS), Alternative 4- Roundabout and Alternative 6- Bridge Alternative**

**Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction**

The changes in the views after project construction is from the motorist view rather than views to the road since the adjacent area is agricultural and not residential. The motorists' views from the road will not be affected by the additional lanes from these vantage points. However, there will be loss to the adjacent property and its building due to the realignment in all three alternatives. Vividness is seen as having a moderate visual quality because elements form perceivable patterns (i.e., line, color, texture) and the view is somewhat memorable. However, the multiple utility lines in the line of sight for the motorists will still exist in this alternative, cluttering the viewshed causing intactness and unity to have a rating of moderate to low visual quality.




### **Alternative 5- Somis Bypass**

#### **Proposed Project Features and Changes in the Views after Project Construction**

Due to the orientation of the study looking westbound on SR 118, assessing the visual quality in the views after project construction for alternative 5 is not within the viewshed. Therefore, an assessment for Visual Assessment #4 is not warranted for this location.





## **14.0 Findings and Conclusion**

The visual effects of the project can be summarized by saying that the rural character of the SR 118 and SR 34 corridor in project area, will remain of moderate quality after project construction.

Views of the road that also includes the background vistas of the mountains and the foreground views of the agricultural land by the motorists would not change in quality by the additional lanes.

The removal of existing vegetation and trees will contribute to the visual change until the new plant material matures.

Whether the motorist view is looking toward the east or west on SR 118 or north or south on SR 34 their views would not be negatively impacted.

Alternative 5 provides the greatest visual impact as two new intersections are created, it cuts through existing agricultural land and new utilities would be placed along the new alignment causing a visual distraction.

Alternative 4 has the potential for a positive visual impact the realignment of Donlon Road avoids much impact to Coyote Creek and all the vegetation and there would no longer be a need for signalization at this location. The entire property located on the southwest corner would be taken to accommodate the roundabout opening the viewsheds for the motorists. The rural character remains the same even enhanced as the removal of the existing property will open the viewshed up and provide more visibility. The center of the roundabout provides opportunities for visual enhancements that the other alternatives do not.

## **15.0 VISUAL MITIGATION**

Caltrans and the FHWA mandate that a qualitative/aesthetic approach should be taken to mitigate for visual quality loss in the project area. This approach fulfills the spirit of the FHWA requirements because it addresses the cumulative loss of visual quality that will occur in the project viewshed when the project is implemented. It also constitutes mitigation that can more readily generate public acceptance of the project.

Visual mitigation for adverse project impacts addressed in the visual assessments and summarized in this report will consist of adhering to the following design requirements in cooperation with the District Landscape Architect. All visual mitigation will be designed and implemented where feasible with the concurrence of the District Landscape Architect.

### **Measures to minimize harm:**

- Where slope easements are needed, the cuts should be terraced or at a slope ratio no greater than 2:1 and replanted with native vegetation that is found within this particular region.
- Limit the amount of disturbance to Coyote Creek, otherwise, proper riparian mitigation will be needed.
- Provide planting or some aesthetic feature within the roundabout center that is suitable to the surrounding area.
- Vegetation that is removed (trees, shrubs, groundcover and natives) will be replaced where space allows and where necessary, irrigation will be installed. Coordination required between District Landscape Architect and District Environmental Branch to select appropriate native vegetation replacement.



## 16.0 Bibliography

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